



October XX, 2020

TO: Officers, PCES, Pay Band Managers, and EAS Employees

SUBJECT: Supplemental Guidance Memorandum

On September 21, 2020, we issued Clarifying Operational Instructions about the Postal Service's practices concerning Overtime, Hiring, Retail Hours, Collection Boxes, Late and Extra Trips, Mail Processing, and Election Mail. On September 25, 2020, we issued a Memorandum entitled "Additional Resources for Election Mail Beginning October 1" which identified additional resources being made available for District Managers, Postmasters, Division Directors, and Plant Managers to utilize, as they determine, to support the timely and expeditious handling of the increased volume of Election Mail. We write today to supplement the Clarifying Operational Instructions and the Additional Resources Memorandum in accordance with a recent federal district court order, in order to reiterate our earlier guidance and to assist in carrying out the specific directives required by the court order.

### **Election Mail is the Postal Service's Number One Priority**

Proper handling and timely delivery of Election Mail is the Postal Service's number one priority. As described below, and in the Clarifying Operational Instructions and the Additional Resources Memorandum, many long-standing recommended practices about how to treat Election Mail are now policy requirements and must be followed. District Managers, Postmasters, Division Directors, and Plant Managers are instructed to ensure that all Election Mail is prioritized and delivered on time. To reiterate, and by way of example, it is Postal Service policy that:

- To the extent excess capacity permits, Election Mail should be prioritized, regardless of the paid class. More detailed guidance on the prioritization of Election Mail is laid out in the Clarifying Operational Instructions and the Additional Resources Memorandum, and below.
- Specifically, Election Mail entered as Marketing Mail should be prioritized and advanced ahead of all other Marketing Mail and processed expeditiously so that it is generally delivered in line with First-Class Mail standards;
- Processing windows on letter and flat sorting equipment should be expanded as necessary to ensure that all Election Mail received prior to the First-Class Mail Critical Entry Time is processed that same day;
- To the extent possible, Election Mail received after the Critical Entry Time should be processed and advanced as if it arrived prior to the Critical Entry Time, unless doing so would disrupt on-time service for Election Mail received prior to the Critical Entry Time;
- Election Mail, including ballots with Green Tags 191, should be prioritized when loading trucks;
- All identifiable ballots returned by voters should be "cancelled" or "postmarked," regardless of the method of payment of postage used, and early cancellations should be conducted the week before Election Day to ensure all collected ballots are processed timely;
- Employees must be aware that balloting materials are handled differently than other unpaid or shortpaid mailpieces. Ballots addressed to an election office, with or without

sufficient postage, must be delivered. Ballots must not be detained or held for postage payment.

- Furthermore, the Postal Service will utilize ballot monitors in each mail processing facility in order to ensure that as many ballots being returned by voters as possible are cancelled as required by our policy;
- Daily “all clears” should be used to ensure that all Election Mail is accounted for in the system and mail scheduled or “committed” to go out is processed accordingly;
- Standardized log sheets should be used to track Election Mail through processing;
- From October 26 through November 24, 2020, ballots may be manually separated and moved by air or according to Priority Mail Express delivery standards regardless of paid class;
- Extra delivery and collection trips are authorized and instructed to be used to ensure that completed ballots reach the appropriate election official by the state’s designated deadline;
- Starting October 26 through November 24, 2020, the use of extraordinary measures beyond our normal course of operations is authorized and expected to be used to accelerate the delivery of identifiable ballots. Please see below for examples of extraordinary measures that may and should be taken if necessary to ensure the expeditious delivery of ballots, which may also include manually separating ballots and moving them by air, consistent with practices used in past elections.

For additional discussion of the Postal Service’s policy requirements concerning the treatment of Election Mail, please refer to the Clarifying Operational Instructions and the Additional Resources Memorandum referenced above.

## **Recommended Practices and Resources for the Treatment of Election Mail**

Additional resources are available to support the timely and expeditious handling of Election Mail. These resources include, but are not limited to:

### **1. Processing**

Election Mail entered as Marketing Mail should be advanced ahead of all other Marketing Mail and processed expeditiously to the extent feasible so that it is generally delivered in line with First-Class Mail delivery standards. Processing windows on letter and flat sorting equipment should be expanded as necessary to ensure that all Election Mail received prior to the First-Class Mail Critical Entry Time is processed that same day. Further, to the extent possible, Election Mail received after the Critical Entry Time should be processed and advanced as if it arrived prior to the Critical Entry Time, unless doing so would disrupt on-time service for Election Mail received prior to the Critical Entry Time.

Other additional processing resources are also authorized and instructed to be used to ensure that Election Mail stays current and moving through the Postal Service's network. This includes, but is not limited to, early cancellations the week before Election Day to ensure all collected ballots are processed timely.

### **2. Transportation**

As described in more detail below, extra transportation resources are authorized and instructed to be used to ensure that Election Mail reaches its intended destination in a timely

manner. This includes, but is not limited to, extra trips from all points of processing and delivery (e.g., retail units and plants), as necessary to connect Election Mail to its intended destination or the next stage in Postal Service processing.

### **3. Delivery/Collections**

Extra delivery and collection trips are authorized and instructed to be used to ensure that completed ballots entered on Election Day reach the appropriate election official by the state's designated deadline on Election Day. This includes, but is not limited to, early collections the week before Election Day to ensure all collected ballots are processed timely, and delivery of ballots found in collections on Election Day to election boards within states requiring ballots be returned by a designated time on Election Day.

### **4. Overtime**

As described in more detail below, overtime is authorized and instructed to be used to support these additional resources and the completion of the additional work.

As stated above, the use of extraordinary measures beyond our normal course of operations is authorized and expected to be executed by local management between October 26 and November 24, to accelerate the delivery of ballots, when the Postal Service is able to identify the mailpiece as a ballot.

Extraordinary measures that should be employed include, but are not limited to, expedited handling, extra deliveries, and special pickups as used in past elections, to connect blank ballots entered by election officials to voters or completed ballots returned by voters entered close to or on Election Day to their intended destination (e.g., Priority Mail Express, Sunday deliveries, special deliveries, running collected ballots to Boards of Elections on Election Day, etc.). These measures should be used freely and liberally.

We know that, as in past elections, there will be entries of ballots to and from voters that will require us to take the extra steps set forth herein to ensure timely delivery. The additional resources available, and our robust practices and procedures that we employ every election cycle, will help ensure that we are able to do everything in our power to meet our customers' expectations that mail will be delivered in a timely manner when our customers use the mail to facilitate or participate in the electoral process.

### **Late and Extra Trips Are Not Banned and Should Be Used When They Would Facilitate the Expeditious Delivery of Election Mail**

To reiterate, late and extra trips are not banned. Pre-approval is not needed for late and extra trips. Authorizing late and extra trips that facilitate the on time delivery of Election Mail will not result in disciplinary action. To the contrary, late and extra trips that would facilitate the on-time delivery of Election Mail are authorized and encouraged—we are committed to using such trips to deliver Election Mail on time.

For example, if a truck needs to be held to receive Election Mail and that delay would not cause the truck to miss a later connection that might delay other Election Mail, the truck should be held until it can receive the Election Mail. Additionally, as stated above, extra trips may be used from all points of processing and delivery (e.g., retail units and plants), as necessary to connect Election Mail to its intended destination or the next stage in Postal Service processing.

## **Overtime Should Be Used to Deliver Election Mail**

Overtime, including penalty overtime, is authorized and instructed to be used to facilitate the timely delivery of Election Mail. Further discussion regarding the use of overtime needed to expeditiously move Election Mail is communicated in the Clarifying Operational Instructions issued on September 21, 2020, and the Additional Resources Memorandum issued on September 25, 2020.

For example, if overtime would ensure that ballots can be processed and delivered in line with First-Class Mail delivery standards, or that a facility clears all of its Election Mail to the greatest extent possible, that overtime is authorized and instructed to be used.

## **Report Violations of Election Mail Policies and Practices**

In the event that any of our current Election Mail policies and practices, including the guidance in this memorandum, are not being observed, or any employee has any concern regarding our ability to deliver Election Mail on time, please report any such concerns as soon as possible so they can be corrected promptly. In the first instance, reports should be made to the relevant ballot ambassador. If the relevant ballot ambassador is not available or is not known, reports should be made to a relevant union representative, who can refer reports of any Election Mail concerns to ballot ambassadors on the reporter's behalf. If the individual reporting the concern is unable to reach either a ballot ambassador or union representative, the individual should contact the relevant Election Mail coordinator; the contact information for all Election Mail coordinators is listed at <https://about.usps.com/what/government-services/election-mail/pdf/political-election-mail-coordinators.pdf>.

For example, please report any delayed ballots or any ballots that have not been prioritized, to the relevant ballot ambassador or the Election Mail coordinator.

## **Recent Guidance, Including this Guidance, Should Be Explained to Your Direct Reports**

As soon as possible, please explain to each of your direct reports the policies and practices described here, including the reporting structure discussed above. Please also explain to each of your direct reports the policies and practices described in the Clarifying Operational Instructions and the Additional Resources Memorandum that are relevant to each direct report, taking into account their individual responsibilities. A copy of this memorandum will be posted on the Postal Service Intranet at [blue.usps.gov](http://blue.usps.gov) and [liteblue.usps.gov](http://liteblue.usps.gov).

Headquarters will also be preparing and distributing a Mandatory Stand-Up Talk that will be pushed to all employees, discussing this memorandum.

## **If You Have Questions About Recent Guidance, Ask**

To provide consistent guidance across the nation, if you have questions regarding Logistics and Processing Operations, please contact Mike Barber, Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations, at [email address to be inserted in version distributed within the Postal Service]. If you have any questions regarding Retail and Delivery Operations, please contact

Joshua Colin, Vice President, Delivery Operations, at [email address to be inserted in version distributed within the Postal Service] or Angela Curtis, Vice President, Retail and Post Office Operations, at [email address to be inserted in version distributed within the Postal Service].